

Tunisia 'at a turning point' stresses UN rights expert

An independent UN human rights expert [welcomed](#) on Thursday the progress made towards democratic reform in Tunisia, since the 2011 revolution, and emphasized the importance of protecting freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

"Tunisia is at a turning point in its post-revolution history," said the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule. His statement followed a 10-day visit during which new legislation on the issue was being discussed.

"My meetings with various interlocutors allowed me to understand the stakes of the democratic transition," he noted, welcoming the progress the country has achieved in terms of human rights protection over the past seven years, and the political will shown by the authorities to adopt new laws and establish institutions in line with international human rights standards.

However, he expressed deep concern over the current law establishing a National Registry for Enterprises, aimed at combating money laundering and terrorism.

Given that the bill creates requirements that would limit the capacity of associations to operate freely, and the important role played by them in the democratic transition, he called for Parliament to exempt associations from the new law. The call was ignored as the bill was adopted last Tuesday, reportedly without further debate.

In his statement, Mr. Voule urged the authorities to reconsider the approval of a law he considers "regressive" for Tunisian civil society.

He also expressed concerns about [reports of arbitrary arrests and disproportionate use of force](#) during the January 2018 protests against the finance law and austerity measures.

In addition, the expert cited delays in putting in place some of the institutions established by the 2014 constitution, such as the constitutional court, the new court of auditors and an institution to safeguard human rights. "Without these institutions, the democratic transition, of which the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are essential pillars, cannot be ensured and might be undermined," he said.

"I truly hope that the democratic transition will be irreversible and lead to a fair and democratic society, in line with the slogan of the revolution," he added, "employment, freedom, dignity."

The conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur will be presented during the 41st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

in June of next year. Preliminary conclusions are available [here](#).

[Bet on 'green economy', Guterres urges world leaders, bestowing top UN award on Indian PM](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday conferred the Organization's highest environmental honour on India's Prime Minister, recognizing Narendra Modi's efforts against climate change and pollution.

"Prime Minister Modi represents an extraordinary legacy," [said](#) Mr. Guterres at the "Champions of the Earth" award ceremony, in the Indian capital New Delhi.

"Prime Minister Modi not only recognizes, knows and understands" the benefits of taking action to stop global warming, said the UN chief, but also "acts with enormous energy to make this change. And this leadership is today more necessary than ever."

[According](#) to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Prime Minister Modi has been recognized for his extensive efforts to control plastic pollution, including a pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India, by 2022. He has also been recognized for his joint initiative with French President Emmanuel Macron to champion the International Solar Alliance – a global partnership to scale up solar energy use and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

In his prize-giving speech, Mt. Guterres called on other world leaders to draw lessons from India and apply them in their own circumstances to "win the race against climate change."

He also highlighted that climate action and development are not contradictory but are mutually supportive.

"The green economy is the good economy. Technology is on our side. Those that will bet on the grey economy will have a grey future, and those that, like in India, are betting on the green economy will have a dominant role in the global economy in the decades to come," said the Secretary-General.

Prime Minister Modi, in accepting the award, said that he was doing so on behalf of millions of Indians "who protect the environment each day."

"From fisherfolk who only take what they need or tribal communities who think of forests as their family. We will never be able to tackle climate change

without bringing climate into our culture. And this is why India is taking so much action for our climate,” said the Indian leader.



Giles Clarke

Secretary-General António Guterres pays visits to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, where he expressed his gratitude for a place that receives and shares with everybody.

Secretary-General shares a meal at a *Langar*

Also, on Wednesday, [Secretary-General](#) visited the Golden Temple in the city Amritsar, where he attended *Langar* – a community kitchen run by Sikh volunteers where people from all backgrounds and communities are provided nutritious food and clean water, at no cost.

During his visit, Mr. Guterres [expressed his deep gratitude](#) to the “wonderful practice that the Golden Temple represents, receiving everybody, sharing with everybody the food, but, more than the food, sharing this wonderful spirit of peace, of harmony, of understanding that we badly need in today’s world.”

The *Langar* at the Golden Temple is attended by thousands of people and pilgrims each day. It is the biggest community kitchen in the world, open 24 hours a day and uses no plastic or disposable utensils and cutlery.

Mr. Guterres is currently on his maiden visit to India as Secretary-General, during which he paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi on the 149th anniversary of his birth; inaugurated ONE UN House – the newly-refurbished building housing UN offices; held bilateral meetings with top Indian Government officials and spoke at the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention, among other engagements.

UN Champions of the Earth award

Established by UNEP in 2005, the [Champions of the Earth](#) award recognizes

“outstanding leaders” from Government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a positive impact on the environment.

[Other winners](#) of the Champions of the Earth award for 2018 are: Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat, an initiative creating high-quality vegetarian meat-alternatives; the Zhejiang River Chiefs programme, which works for protecting water from pollution as well as ecological restoration; Joan Carling, an indigenous and environmental rights activist; Cochin International Airport, the world’s first to be fully solar-powered; and French President Macron, for his international cooperation on environmental action.

[Child sexual abuse and exploitation: UN event sheds light on the unthinkable](#)

Governments can and must do more to end the daily sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and boys worldwide, an [event](#) at UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday highlighted, including through a newly launched tool designed to help countries track progress and gaps.

“Every day, across all countries and levels of society, millions of girls and boys face the alarmingly common childhood experience of sexual abuse and exploitation,” [said](#) Amina J. Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General in her opening remarks for the event, co-organized by the World Childhood Foundation, the Swedish Mission to the UN, the UN Office of Partnerships and other non-profits.

According to the [UN Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), globally, as of 2014, at least 120 million girls under the age of 20 – about one in 10 – have been forced to engage in sex or perform other sexual acts. Millions more, including millions of boys, never tell anyone about being abused, for fear of stigma or reprisals.

Furthermore, the UK-based independent think-tank, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), estimates that the global economic impacts and costs resulting from the consequences of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children could be as high as \$7 trillion – a figure cited at the meeting by Ms. Mohammed. This massive cost is higher than the investment required to prevent much of that violence.

“Faced with growing evidence of the impacts and the emergence of the internet in facilitating the sexual exploitation of children, governments have started to act,” noted the deputy UN chief.

[Target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) calls on all countries to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children” by 2030.

“All over the world, governments are updating their laws and policies to more effectively criminalize child sexual abuse and exploitation. Governments are also building systems to better protect and care for child victims. Civil society, the media and industry are key allies in these efforts,” said Ms. Mohamed.

During the event, a benchmarking tool developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit was officially launched. Known as “Out of the Shadows”, it covers 40 countries and assesses how effectively nations are addressing issues of child sexual abuse across four categories: the safety of the environments in which children evolve; the legal frameworks in place; the level of government commitment and capacity to address the issue; and the level of engagement of the private sector, civil society and the media.

The Index reveals that the wealthiest countries tend to have the highest rankings, but even so, their scores reveal critical gaps in terms of achieving all the necessary protective conditions for children.

Much of the sexual violence is being widely shared over the Internet. “In terms of trends, and this is of course worrying, what we see in terms of online sexual abuse, is that a vast majority of the children we’re looking at are ‘white’ children...coming from the Western part of the world,” said Björn Sellström, Coordinator for Crimes Against Children for the inter-governmental crime-fighting organization INTERPOL.

“We see younger and younger kids. And the younger the kids are, the more violent the abuse, especially for boys,” he explained, adding that the majority of the materials depict pre-pubescent or toddlers, which points to the fact that perpetrators are often well-known to the victims.

The UN deputy chief noted that thanks to data collected over the years, we now have a deeper understanding “of what works to make society safer for children”, insisting on the need for multi-sectoral and multi-partner approaches, within the UN and at the national level.

The Out of the Shadows tool was created to allow an easy collection and sharing of best practices worldwide, a reliable identification of gaps, and widen discussion of a subject that remains taboo in many societies.

Ms. Mohammed concluded: “Preventing violence and exploitation of children is everyone’s business, everywhere, at all times. We must address this challenge and break the silence.”

UN top judicial body orders US to ease Iran sanctions

In a [ruling](#) issued on Wednesday, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, ordered the United States to lift some of the economic sanctions it has imposed on Iran, which effect the importation of humanitarian goods and products, as well as the safety of civilian aircraft.

Following President Donald Trump's announcement in May that the US was withdrawing from the 2015 agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, known as the [JCPOA](#) – reached by Iran, the five permanent members of the Security Council, Germany and the European Union – the U.S. President ordered sanctions “lifted or waived” in connection with the agreement, to be re-imposed. The sanctions affect anyone doing business with Iran in areas such as finance, oil and shipping.

Iran claimed that the sanctions violated a 1955 bilateral [treaty](#) regulating trade and commerce between the two countries and, in August, brought the case to the ICJ, seeking an emergency suspension.

In its ruling, the ICJ found Iran's case to be credible and urgent, ruling that restrictions on importing “foodstuffs and medicines, including life-saving medicines, treatment for chronic disease or preventive care, and medical equipment, may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran.”

The Court ordered the U.S. to “remove, by means of its choosing, any impediments arising from the measures announced on 8 May”, allowing medicines and medical devices, foodstuff and agricultural goods into Iran, together with “spare parts, equipment and associated services (including warranty, maintenance, repair services and inspections) necessary for the safety of civil aviation.”

The decision is reportedly the first time that international judges have ruled on a case of “economic warfare.”

Following the ICJ ruling, The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, announced at a press conference and on Twitter, that the US was “terminating” the 1955 Treaty of Amity with Iran.

In Iraq, UN welcomes designation of new Prime Minister, calls for 'truly representative' new cabinet

The United Nations Special Representative for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, on Wednesday, [welcomed](#) the designation of a new Prime Minister, Adel Abdel-Mahdi, and urged political leaders to promote women's meaningful representation in politics.

"As the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq ([UNAMI](#)) and the United Nations family in Iraq congratulate Mr. Abdel-Mahdi on his appointment, we recognise the enormous challenges he faces," said Mr. Kubiš, adding that "we stand side by side with him, as he leads the country in its steady march towards a future of stability, economic growth and prosperity."

Since the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein was toppled following the 2003 invasion, the country's three largest ethnic-sectarian groups have shared the country's highest positions, with the Prime Minister position held by a Shia politician, the Speaker of Parliament post by a Sunni, and the Presidency by a Kurd.

Ending months of deadlock following inconclusive national elections in May, the new Prime Minister – a former Vice- President, Oil Minister and Finance Minister – has one month to form a cabinet that will be presented to parliament for approval.

In this regard, Mr. Kubiš urged political leaders to live up to their pledges on women's meaningful representation in politics.

"Iraq needs a stable, national government that brings Iraqis together and restores hope in their country as they move forward in the post-Da'esh period," said Mr. Kubiš. "This government should be formed well within the constitutional timeline, should be professional, competent, truly representative and inclusive of women in cabinet posts".